



UPCOMING ENROLLMENT DEADLINES:

Next:
Wednesday, January 21, 2015
(for March benefit)

Future:
Friday, February 20, 2015
Monday, March 23, 2015



QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What is the maximum benefit for 2015?

\$130

TIP MOVES TO MONTHLY RECERTIFICATION

All participants must recertify their transit benefit application by 15 January 2015. The Office of Financial Operations (FMO) in a memo dated 7 January 2014 announced that all Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) participants will be required to re-certify their transit benefit application by the 15th of each month beginning in January 2015. This monthly recertification will take only a minute or two for participants to review their record, confirm its accuracy and certify that they are still using a qualified means of transportation to commute to and from work. Supervisors and reviewing officials will not need to validate and approve recertifications unless a participant updates his or her application with new information.



Participants who do not have regular access to a computer at work can recertify their transit benefit application from a home computer or even a smartphone by logging into the Transportation Incentive Program System (TIPS) using a username and password. The October 2014 newsletter has instructions on how create or find your username and password if you have never logged in using that method before.

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What will happen if a participant doesn't recertify by the deadline? Participants who do not recertify by the monthly deadline will be withdrawn from the program until they complete the recertification process. If a participant is withdrawn for not recertifying, he or she may experience a delay or disruption in their transit benefit. What should I do if I am not going to be in the office for the entire recertification period? Don't worry. There are tools in place that can help you manage your account to ensure that your benefits will be in place when you need them. First, you can recertify from any computer or smartphone that has access to the Internet, so whether you are on TDY or extended leave, you can manage your account from wherever you are. But if you will be deploying on a training

exercise for six weeks, recovering from a major surgery, taking time to care for a newborn child or something else that will prevent you from recertifying, you can place your transit benefit record in a suspended status to accommodate these types of short-term periods (less than 90 days) when you will not be using mass transit or a vanpool to commute to and from work. Participants will not be required to recertify while their transit benefit account is in a **"Suspended"** status.

Participants with an application in a **"Suspended"** status are not authorized to use their transit benefit while their application is suspended since they will not be commuting to and from work. However, the Department of Transportation (DOT) will continue to load transit benefits to the participant's TRANServe debit card during the suspended period to ensure a smoother transition back to "Approved" status when the participant begins using mass transit again to commute to work. Participants must ensure that their card is not charged during this period by 1) canceling any recurring payments that have been set-up and 2) if necessary, notifying their transit provider or vanpool coordinator that their card should not be charged during the suspended period. Participants will be responsible to repay the Federal government for any transit benefits used during the suspended period. Once the suspended period expires, the participant can begin using their transit benefits immediately. The application will automatically return to an "Approved" status and the participant will be required to recertify his or her transit record by the 15th of the month.

CONFUSED BY RECENT TAX EXTENDERS?

On 19 December 2014, the President signed the Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014 (TIPA) which amends the Internal Revenue Code to extend some expired tax provisions. Were transit benefits included? Yes and No. Congress expanded the maximum amount of transit expenses that can be excluded from gross income and wages up to \$250. Unfortunately the expanded benefit expires on December 31, 2014 and does not apply to 2015. This means that there will be no adjustment to the maximum benefit in 2015 unless Congress takes another action. So why did Congress do this? The changes in this legislation do impact some commuters. But it will only impact those commuters who either 1) had their employer withhold more than \$130 per month from their salary and set it aside for transit benefits or 2) who were provided more than \$130 per month in direct transit benefits from their employer. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provided procedural guidance in Notice 2013-8 – "Application of Retroactive Increase in Excludible Transit Benefits" to address a similar provision in the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012. These procedures did not provide a process to reimburse employees for transit expenses above what was provided in the form of transit benefits during the year. Unless the IRS changes its procedural guidance or the Department of Defense issues additional policy, Transportation Incentive Program participants will not benefit from TIPA.



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